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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KATHMANDU 001759

SIPDIS

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NSC FOR GREEN/DORMANDY  
LONDON FOR POL-BELL

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TAGS: PTER PGOV ASEC NP

SUBJECT: NEPAL: SITREP 2: QUIET ON SEPT. 2: NATIONAL DAY OF MOURNING

REF: A. KATHMANDU 1752

1B. KATHMANDU 1756  
1C. KATHMANDU 1753  
1D. KATHMANDU 1748

Classified By: Ambassador James F. Moriarty, Reasons 1.4 (b/d)

SUMMARY

11. (U) In the September 1 rioting in reaction to the executions of the twelve Nepalis in Iraq, seven people died and eighty-six were injured in Kathmandu. The Government-called curfew has resumed in Kathmandu after being lifted briefly the morning of September 2 to allow Kathmanduites to worship, shop and travel where needed. The city remains quiet, but a few incidents occurred while the curfew was lifted. Political forces are calling for patience and cooperation, although at least one opposition party has also criticized the government. End Summary.

QUIET, BUT UNEASY, IN THE CITY ON SEPTEMBER 2

12. (U) The country is quiet, observing the national day of mourning. Kathmandu is also obeying the indefinite government-called curfew, in place since 2:00 pm on September 11. The GON had lifted the curfew from 6:00 am to 9:30 am local time September 2 to allow people to worship, shop for the day's provisions, and go where they needed. During this time, a small group burned tires in the street in one area; in another part of town, people noticed a manpower agency that had not been damaged yesterday and destroyed it. The GON has not announced any plans to lift the curfew today, but is assessing the situation and taking it one day at a time. The Armed Police Force and Royal Nepal Army (RNA) are deployed throughout the city. Vehicular traffic is practically nil; however, in the neighborhoods, some people are walking and gathering.

ASSESSING THE DAMAGE

13. (U) An assessment of the damage from the September 1 riots and mob activity is ongoing. Police sources told Emboff that seven people were killed during the rioting - two by police and five by other rioters (three were killed because they were mistaken by the crowds as Muslims). Thirty-five police and 51 civilians were injured. According to police and RNA sources, the mobs damaged 28 vehicles and ransacked 40 manpower agencies. However, reports vary as to how many manpower agencies were damaged during the looting - estimates range from 40 to 50-80 to over 200 agencies. The largest mosque in Kathmandu was damaged, as were other mosques in town and throughout the country. Both offices of Qatar Airways were burned, as was the Pakistan International Airways Office; other houses or shops suspected of having a Muslim connection were damaged by stones, or in some cases, fire. The police arrested fifteen rioters.

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

14. (U) The Government has revoked the license of the Moonlight agency - the agency involved in sending the twelve victims to Iraq. The Ministry of Labor also announced on September 2 that it would take action to cancel the licenses of about one hundred manpower companies. It did not specify the grounds for this action. The GON also stated that it had decided that each individual seeking to work outside of Nepal would be required to purchase insurance coverage of one million rupees (about USD 13,000, equivalent to the amount the GON is paying in compensation to the families of each of the victims). The GON did not address whether this requirement would apply to the some 500,000 Nepalis currently working abroad (this number does not include the number of Nepalis working in India, which shares an open border with Nepal and is a traditional place of employment for Nepalis).

PUBLIC RESPONSE TO SEPTEMBER 1 RIOTING

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15. (U) The news reported that all of the major parties, including the opposition Nepali Congress Party (NCP), echoed Prime Minister Deuba's call for patience, and called for patience and cooperation at this tragic moment. The NCP took the opportunity to criticize the government "as highly irresponsible and ineffective." The Kathmandu Post editorial reiterated calls to maintain harmony. In the September 2 editorial, it noted the importance of remembering the Nepalis still working in the Middle East. "Any social disharmony against the Muslim community can backfire on them, and subsequently the economy. The Nepali laborers need safety, security and of course, strong ties between Nepal and the countries they are working in." The Kathmandu Post also carried a front page story including the condemnation by the international community of the execution of the twelve Nepalis, the Secretary's condolences to the PM, and statements from UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, the Japanese Foreign Minister, and Amnesty International.

16. (U) The Kathmandu Post called on the Home Ministry to take responsibility for the plundering and urged the government to set up a commission to probe the violence. The Kathmandu Post's front page focused, however, on the vandalization of the offices of its parent company, Kantipur Publications. The editors castigated the government, the police and the RNA, for failing to provide security, despite repeated calls for assistance. Kantipur suspects that people used the cover of the riots to damage its offices.

COMMENT

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17. (C) The curfew has given time for people to cool down, and Embassy contacts are hopeful the situation is improving and that the government will soon be able to lift the curfew. The government, stung by criticism, may now be overly cautious as it takes all steps to prevent a recurrence. The Embassy will reopen with full staffing levels once the GON lifts the curfew.

MORIARTY